

# “AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #97

Special election report

## SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR ENTITLED ‘ISRAEL UPDATE’



14 DECEMBER 2022

*In a brief ‘Webinar’ session organized by the Washington based MEF, Ashley Perry, an adviser to Israel’s minister of foreign affairs and deputy prime minister in 2009-15, provides weekly updates on Israeli politics.*

### SUMMARY OF ASHLEY PERRY’S COMMENTS

- Perry began his weekly briefing by saying that the time consuming formation of a new coalition government was the country’s key priority at this stage.
- As predicted, the President of Israel had now extended another 10 days to Netanyahu to form his government (as opposed to the usual 14 days, though given that no one else is in a position for forming a government at this time, the extra 4 days will most probably be allocated should the need arise).
- Perry said that at this stage Netanyahu has reached all the agreements that he needed to reach with his coalition partners. However, due to a lack of trust in him, the partners have all agreed that their points of agreements should become law through legislation at the Knesset before they all sign up.
- Consequently, there are now 4 pieces of legislation before the Knesset which require 3 readings prior to becoming law. The first reading for the following 4 pieces has already been carried out with the next two readings expected to end within the next several days:
  - 1. The first piece of legislation will ensure that the next Israeli Minister of National Security (Itamar Ben Gvir) will also have full control of the National Police Force.
  - 2. The second piece of legislation will allow Aryeh Derri (leader of the ‘Haredi religious’ Shas Party) who had accepted a plea bargain for a prior offense not to face any challenges to him for assuming a cabinet position.
  - 3. The third piece of legislation will give the new incoming Defense Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, extra powers especially in the

occupied territories that are at this time beyond the mandated scope of his position.

- 4. The fourth piece of legislation ensures that current smaller factions in the coalition cannot be broken.
- Perry said that it was clear that based on previous experiences in dealing with Netanyahu, none of the coalition members are willing to enter into a union with Netanyahu unless they are confident that what has been promised to them will be fully honoured and carried out.
- Perry said that Netanyahu had also been under a great deal of pressure from international quarters, especially regarding the subject of proposed changes to the 'Law of Return' (especially concerning the right of citizenship for Jews living outside Israel) . He said that it was most likely that Netanyahu would appoint some kind of a committee to study this matter, thus "kicking the can up the road to some future date".
- Perry went on to say that following the formation of the new government, certain new legislation expected to help Netanyahu overcome some of his current legal problems is expected to be deliberated and enacted by the Knesset .
- Perry added that in the aftermath of such a scenario, it is currently being speculated that Netanyahu might then make way for Benny Gantz to join the coalition (some Gantz has not rejected) by getting rid of some of the religious hardliners. In such an event, Gantz will once again assume his previous position as Minister of Defence and Netanyahu will reward the current designated Minister, General Gallant in some other way.
- Perry ended his comments by saying that in the previous 24 hours, based on very good intelligence, the Israeli air force had attacked an Iranian convoy of 24 Trucks headed for Hezbollah in Lebanon near the Iraqi border and had destroyed a single truck believed to have been carrying advanced Iranian weaponry including drones.
- Perry added that due to this successful precision targeting, it was being speculated that the Islamic Republic of Iran might now wish to use civilian airports (e.g., Beirut airport) for purposes of re-supplying its surrogate elements and especially Hezbollah – something that will pose new challenges along with new difficulties for the Israeli Defence Forces.

